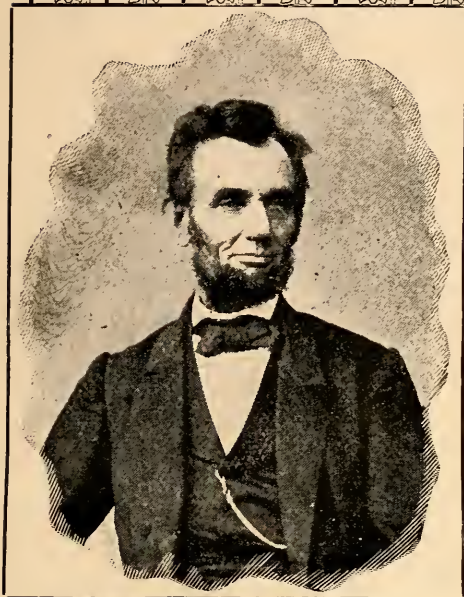


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How I Twice Eloped

The only Novelette ever
sketched by Abraham Lincoln


Elaborated by

CATHERINE EAVES

"Did you ever write out a story in your mind?
I did when I was a little codger."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

CHICAGO, ILL.
OAK PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO.
115 OAK STREET



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How **¶** Twice Eloped

An Indiana Idyll

Suggested by

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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With an apology to the shade of
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
for the transgression of descanting upon his
INDIANA IDYLL,
this dissertation is dedicated to the bright
analyst of his character,
HON. MURAT HALSTEAD,
by
the humble Author.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN
as a youth
Sig Coccia's celebrated statue
Exhibited at the Royal Academy, London

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Extract from editorial by Murat Halstead in "Standard Union" of Brooklyn 1895, anent portrait owned by Hon. Robert T. Lincoln of his famous father, Abraham Lincoln.

.....
.....
....for that age the youthfulness of the portrait is wonderful. This is a new Lincoln, and far more attractive, in a sense, than anything the public has possessed. This is the portrait of a remarkably handsome man.....The head is magnificent, the eyes deep and generous, the mouth sensitive, the whole expression something delicate, tender, pathetic, poetic. This was the young man with whom the phantoms of romance dallied, the young man who recited poems, and was fanciful and speculative, and in love and despair, but upon whose brow there already gleamed the illumination of intellect, the inspiration of patriotism. There were vast possibilities in the young man's face. He might have been a military chieftain, a novelist, a poet, a philosopher, Ah! a hero, a martyr—and yes, this young man might have been—he even was Abraham Lincoln! This was he with the world before him. It is a good fortune to have the magical revelation of the young man the world venerates. This look into his eyes, into his soul—not before he knew sorrow, but long before the world knew him—and to feel that it is worthy to be what it is, and that we are better acquainted with him and love him the more, is something beyond price.

* * *

On reading the above splendid analysis of Abraham Lincoln's character by the able pen of Murat Halstead, I

became emboldened to try and draw — guided by that— a feeble pen-picture on more enlarged scale, of the great and loveable man in his young rustic days.

May the shade of Abraham Lincoln forgive the trembling, botching transcriber of his own, charming Indiana Idyl.

The few words in italics are historical.

CATHERINE EAVES.

Hoosier Heights

Buckthorn Valley, Ind.

Sept. 1901.

An Explanation.

Mr. Publisher.

My brother William insists upon my writing this letter; it is very funny, or, at any rate, strange to write to a person that you have not the slightest idea whom he may turn out to be. But the case is so peculiar that there is no other way of doing it. Brother William is going to the great city of Chicago on business for a few days, and while there, is going to see some publisher regarding a manuscript he has with him. But he is not the author of it, nor am I, — the fact is — it has a great, big, glorious name attached to it. I dare scarcely tell you, — you will stagger when you read it, — it is a beautiful, moral, and charming sketch by Abraham Lincoln!!!

Now I know you will stare, — and you not knowing anything about it! So I must explain. We have down in our parts a small literary society in connection with our church, and beating about for a theme to write an essay or a poem or a story about, one of our elders, uncle Remus, who heard about it, proposed that we should take up one of Abe. Lincoln's well-known little stories which he always was fond of telling, and elaborate the same into a regular tale, in several chapters, with a strong, implied moral at the tag end. Now, the one we chose, the illustrious Abraham Lincoln, himself, had intended to enlarge into a novelette, but, somehow, never found opportunity to do so.

Living in and near Gentryville, the almost classic Lincolnean ground, we deemed it our bounden duty, and a great honor, to accept Uncle Remus' proposal. He gave us the entire outlines of a story, which he had learned some years ago from a personal old friend of President Lincoln's in Springfield, old Mr. Kidd, to whom the illustrious Abraham Lincoln himself had told it in a jocular way.

We had no less than seven papers submitted to our little literary society, (of which I have the honor of being secretary,) for competition; two were essays not at all in accordance with the theme set forth, and the rules laid down, and one was a pretentious, lengthy comic poem, written by a mad-cap of a boy, but, oh, such stuff, rhyme, rhythm, and reason all out of joint, but four were regular little stories, according to the rules, though, of course crude and stultified, — all but one, and that one took us all by surprise. It was afterwards, by request, read at two general meetings, half each time, and everybody thought it ought to be published. Now it depends upon if you think so too, Sir. It is written by a charming and unassuming young lady (of only nineteen), but she is so modest that she on no account will allow her real name to be published, but has assumed a pseudonym, or pen-name.

We have much debated upon a strong and suitable title, as we know that is very important, such as: "How I twice eloped," by Abraham Lincoln or, "A common Horse-Sense Tale" by Abraham Lincoln, but that sounds like a bad pun; however, the writer, herself, has abided by her original subtitle, that of: "An Indiana Idyl," by Abraham Lincoln, as she disclaims any merit in the mere

elaboration of the sketch, and she want's to place the honor where honor is due.

My brother will inform us of your decision.

Apologizing for my long letter, trespassing upon your valuable time

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours very respectfully

Sally W.

Secretary for "the Lincoln Literary Society"

which is the new name we are going to assume if you accept and publish 'An Indiana Idyl,' by Abraham Lincoln. Sept. 1901 Hoosier Heights near Gentryville, Ind.

CHAPTER I.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

“When we were living in Buckthorn Valley in Indiana, a woman with her two daughters came travelling along, their vehicle broke down, and we helped their driver to fix it up.”

* * *

Idyllic Life.

All depends upon in what spirit you look upon things. The color-blind have no conception of the beauty of some colors, the squint-eyed look at things awry, but those who are neither blind nor morally oblique look at things straight as the are. The poor are great philosophers,—I mean in submitting to the oppression of the rich, and those living in the country are often keen observers; they are in daily sweet communion with nature, and instinctively or intuitively understand her ways and means, and some times from a trivial incident they will draw a moral lesson where you or I, would see nothing but the ludicrous. "The simple annals of the poor" are therefore daily of more moment to the people at large than the book-learned world imagines.

Dame Nature had thrown open a full page for her *abedarians* to read, to study, and ponder over in the shape of an almost square meadow with an illuminated text of

variegated flowers, margined with a broad border of foliage. Here and there in the copse lay sturdy trunks of stalwart trees that had to yield to the settler's aggressive axe, and sacrificed their glorious and splendid lives to become useful to man, and they were now awaiting customary, neighborly log-rolling. An almost stifling heat lay oppressive over the land, giving the impression of southern indolence and languor, but down among the shady grass myriads of insects were busy plying their vocations, "for every one hath business and desire, such as it is," and between the branches of a neighborly hickory and May-apple a large spider had woven its net, and was busy strengthening and drawing it taut, waiting for the victims that occasion would be sure to bring. Near by a big rawboned lad was sitting on a rustic fence, his knees drawn up to his chin. An axe rested idly against his knee. He wore a pair of blue homespun jeans, all too short for him, and his round-about jacket he seemed to have grown out of, an old wide-awake barely kept in place his unkempt hair; raw-hide boots completed the outfit. An old, soiled book lay in his lap;—he had tried to read but the floral text embroidered on the carpet,—like a Moslem prayer-rug,—before him, had diverted his attention, and now his deep, sunken eyes gazed intently at the work of his diligent neighbor, as if he were trying to solve the mathematical problem the scheming spider was displaying before him. A few tiny, unsuspecting insects had already been caught in the net, but the master-spirit was still intersecting new lines, and cross combinations, making the meshes smaller and the fabric stronger and securer. A gorgeous, brown and golden, large butterfly came flitting quite close by, as if the innocent creature had twitted the

wary and venomous catcher,—the boy held his breath in sheer anxiety lest the beautiful being should be caught,—and if so, he would instinctively, on the instant, have demolished the wondrous work of the calculating mathematician, and liberated the prisoner,—so strong was his sympathy with the unwary and unprotected brown butterfly. But fortunately it skimmed by and darted off on business and pleasure among the flowers of the meadow. The spider seemed to glare enraged at it, and climbed nimbly and eagerly to the edge of his net, and uncoiled another long, slimy line from out himself to extend the circuit of his nefarious business. And the boy reasoned to himself:—Yea, out of oneself the means and energy must all come; to be prepared is everything,—the opportunities will come: that great prize of the brown and golden butterfly escaped him—but the next will not. He will profit by disappointment; he will feast right royally yet. Success will ultimately attend on methodical calculation.

A mocking-bird scattered in rich profusion a cascade of sometimes luscious, sometimes silvery strains,—then stopped abruptly as if listening for answer, or approval, in the sylvan bower, and when none came, laughed immoderately, and then sang lustily to itself, as if all the woodland must perforce listen to its heaven-bestowed gift; and the lad listened meditating, and tried to fathom the mystery of the message of song, but it seemed to him as whimsical, unaccountable and unknowable as dame nature herself in her most capricious moods,—or the blessings and misfortunes that seem scattered haphazard by providence itself. Well,—he summed up to himself, muttering,—perhaps only *seem* so.

From the opposite side of the meadow, just emerging from the copse, a prairie-schooner came slowly dragging along,—the horses were jaded and weary,—the driver seemed asleep, the heat had nearly overcome him, the horses wandered almost at will,—for there was no regular road, only a trail with deep, miry ruts. There was no one visible but the surly looking teamster, but from under the canvas came a strain of a hymn, or patriotic song; sung by female voices, of which only the burden distinctly reached the lad, where he sat perched on the fence.

Ever happy times will be
In the country of the free.

He smiled thoughtfully and complaisantly, to himself at the song-laden message,—but scarcely had he done so, before he descried in the distance how the wagon on descending the somewhat steep bank suddenly tilted over to the front, precipitating the driver headlong down, turning over horses, and the whole concern. Shrieks and cries succeeded the song, and brought thither a farm-laborer, who came out of the adjacent wood, but he made no hurry, only slowly advanced to the capsized schooner, from which a young girl of some seventeen years had just emerged, helping her mother to crawl forth, and with combined efforts they were now trying to pull out the younger child.

—Ain't you going to help a fellow when you see him standing on his head?—came from the infuriated teamster.

—I'm sure I didn't see you standing on your head, the canvas hid ye—but sure I will—came the drawling reply.

By this time our meditative friend from the rustic fence came scurrying along on his long legs to volunteer his services, just as his stepbrother John got the driver extricated from the entanglement of the reins and traces, and helped him on his feet again. He was just in time to receive into his arms a young girl of some thirteen summers, as she, with his assistance, emerged from the mysterious interior, from among bundles and bedding, and crockery-ware. It was an armful he got, and a strange sensation vibrated through his nerves, and caused his blood to tingle as he gently placed her on the ground.

—Are you hurt? he asked,

—Not a little bit.

—Were you much afraid?

—Not the least. I think it's rare fun.

—Oh, Ann, how can you say so?

—Well, mother, I think so, when nobody is hurt, and we only had a wee, little tumble, after all that jolting.

—I suppose we shall have to walk the rest of the way; it can't be very far, anyhow.

—Where are you going, ma'am? our lanky friend inquired.

—To South Creek camp, to join my husband.

—Oh, that's some ten or twelve miles from here. You will have to stay with us for a day, or so, until we fix you a new, off-side, front wheel. I will have to go over to Gentryville to get that, so you had better come along with me to mother, she will make you very welcome.

—Well, you are really very considerate, young man; I think we shall have to accept your hospitality, or what say you, girls?

—Oh, yes, mother, if we may—

The boy smiled inwardly, pleased at the prospect of a little company.

—What may be your name, young master?

—Abraham, so please you, ma'am—he drawled out.

—Oh, what a long name! Ann replied inadvertently.

—Yes, but they call me Abe generally, for sake of brevity. I shall only help John and your driver to brace up the wagon, and I will bring you home. It is'nt a stone-throw to our house. Just on the other side of the hillock. You can leave your things quite safe, there are no thieves, or Indians, about here, and your man can tedder your horses in the meadow, under yonder beech. Come along, all of you!

On making for the house Abe had a good opportunity of taking stock of his protégées. The matronely woman was really very comely, although about forty, and by far the best looking of the three. But a sad and pensive expression was spread over her pale face. They all wore sun-bonnets of blue callico. But there was a neatness and trimness about the mother's appearance which was lacking in her daughters. She wore a plain dress, without any trimmings whatever, it was even a little the worse for wear, which old gown she as a thrifty housewife naturally had selected for a travelling dress. Her eldest daughter showed a slight indication of frippery in her dress which was of grayish tint, with actually a fur-below of dark-blue stuff, and on her neck, which was only visible from the front, there was a small, black, velvet ribbon, with a tiny gold heart, that bobbed up and down on the throat as she spoke, which made Abe almost laugh, for it was so ludicrously suggestive as it pointed straight out at him,

each time she spoke. "That little golden heart of hers is in too tight a place," thought the young philosopher to himself. Her dress was somewhat shorter, and made quite visible her small feet, incased in a pair of sturdy slippers, tied crossways above the ankles. The youngest girl, Ann, as he had heard her called just now, wore an old frock, made too short even for her young age; it was of a kind of nondescript color between faded drab and soiled buff, and had evidently been a best gown, now selected to travel in. Her light brown hair, which as the sun shone on it suggested a suspicion as of reddish golden threads intermixed, hung disgracefully loose about her, for her sunbonnet had fallen back, and the strings had nearly threatened to strangle her, in her effort to emerge from the capsized schooner. She wore a frill round her neck, which would have suggested a Punchinello, if such a personage had been known to the beholder.

On the road Abe said with a smile,—Well, to tell you the truth, ma'm, since no one is hurt,—not even the horses,—I am not particularly sorry for your little mishap, provided your husband won't be too anxiously awaiting you, for we don't have many visitors here, and unless I go down to Gentryville,—and it is a mile and a half to town,—I haven't many to talk to;—a little company, you know, is always welcome to us country folks.—Where may you be coming from with your girls, ma'am?

—From Kentucky, Master Abraham.

—So did we some eight years ago,—we came from Knob Creek in La Rue county. My father came here into Indiana to better himself, besides, neither

himself, nor my own mother, when she was alive, could abear the slave-trade.

That is the very reason we have left too;—I hope it will never disgrace Indiana. It is perfectly impious, the women added vehemently.

—Oh, *if ever I have a chance I will have a hard hit at it*, replied young Abe, a wild, electric sensation coursing through his blood, and he stopped for a moment, and drew himself up to his full height, his eyes flamed, and he seemed as one inspired,—which made all his companions look at him in surprise.

—How old may you be, Master Abraham? asked the mother.

—Sixteen, last February.

—Only sixteen! Why, I thought you were at least twenty.

—Yes, I am tall and big for my age. They used to nickname me the *little giant*.

—And what are you going to be? Farmer, of course?

—I don't know about that. Do you want a good laugh?

—Yes, of course we do,—the youngest girl answered, ever alert, and on the look out for merriment.

—Well, then,—I have just a notion to become—well, why don't you laugh?

—We haven't heard anything yet, the elder daughter observed.

—Some people make up their mind to laugh beforehand, but he laughs best who laughs last.

—Well, but let us hear.

—There is mother standing in the door waiting for us. You will hear from the others by and by, for they

all think it monstrous funny for me to have such a notion,—all but my step-mother,—and she is a women of rare sense, that thinks nothing impossible if only you set about it in the right way.

—Here mother, I have brought you company;—this lady and her daughters,—they are your daughters, ain't they?—have come all the way from Kentucky, and were going to the camp at South Creek,—when their wagon had a break down on our track. I'll get a new wheel at Gentryville for them.

—And in the meantime, perhaps, you will allow me to cook our food in your kitchen? the women said.

—Certainly, certainly, my dear; you are welcome to all the assistance we can give you.—So you come from Kentucky? I must have a long talk with you. And these are your girls? Well, I'm sure! I lived in Kentucky before I married again, and came here. It makes one feel warm at heart to meet folks from home. Be seated, girls, and put your bundles away. Sally, my dear, bring in some fresh spring water,'tis a warm day.—And then the hospitable housewife spread the table with some doughnuts, blackberries and milk, grapes, paw-paws, hickory-nuts and May-apples, and old-fashioned hospitality was freely dispensed in that manner in which the poor excel, by making the visitor feel at ease, and quite at home, where heartiness supplies the place of ceremony.—Eat, my dears, to your heart's content, or your body's fill, you are so very welcome, the more you eat the better I shall be pleased." The plain spoken hostess did not express herself so vulgarly direct, for good manners were not lacking to that sensitive heart, but her frank and kindly invitation might easily have been thus translated.

The father came home, and the travelers were introduced, and the toiler's hand of right good fellowship extended to one and all,—and the driver, who had appeared rather aggravated at the mishap, cheered up considerably when father Thomas began dilating upon the prospects of the crops, and the condition of the country. The young daughters of the two families grouped together, and after a little shyness had worn off, began to chatter freely with one another, two or three speaking together at one and the same time, when they became very animated. Abe, who was no very great ladies man, glanced askance at them, and chuckled to himself when he listened to their chattering, and felt tempted to put in a droll remark, by way of a spoke, to keep the wheel going.

—You don't appear to have any niggers in these parts,—the driver observed to the farmer.

—No, and I am right glad of it, for I hate to see them creatures treated like cattle. That was one of the reasons I left Kentucky years ago.

—And I, for one,—said Abraham, don't believe slavery is justifiable, even though they twist and turn some passages in the Old Testament to prove that it was so, then. I hold it damnable that man, created in the image of his maker, should be held in bondage,—it is perfectly blasphemous, for, surely, if we picture us God as anything, it must be as a free agent. I think the freer a man is the more god-like is he.

—But, surely, that reference in the Bible is to the white folks, the Israelites in particular?—advocated the driver.

—Nonsense, man, the races in the East are so intermixed that they are of all possible shades and hues,—Abe replied.

—Being created in the image of his maker, I take it, must mean spiritually,—interpolated the traveling lady.

—Yes: of course, but I should like to know if human nature isn't much the same all over the world, if given the same conditions to develop in,—Abraham rejoined.

—But you must admit, master, that the niggers are an inferior race, anyhow, I heard a farmer's wife in Kentucky say—and she was the sister-in-law of the secretary-of-state, so she ought to know someting,—she said that the negroes were a dense lot for they all have such thick skulls,—the teamster elucidated.

—Ha! ha! ha!—Abe burst out. Why, man, if you possessed a valuable gem, a rich jewel, the more strong, surely, you would make the casket to hold it;—that might be answered from the nigger's point of view, besides, you see, the intelligence doesn't enter the brains through the thick skull, but through the eyes, and ears, and sensation of the nerves. You are way behind in Kentucky, yet, to hold such silly ideas. Do you know why their skulls are thick? Why, man, for the same reason that their hair is thick and kinky. Have you ever seen any picture of people in the East,—I mean Turkey, and India, and other hot climes, don't you know that they wear turbans as a protection against heat, for that same reason has wise providence endowed the negroes with thick skulls and kinky hair.

—Abe knows everything, friend, and always sifts matters to the very bottom, and finds out the reason why and wherefore,—spoke his stepmother, serene, and a little severe of countenance.

—Yes,—the father added, turning to the visitors,—our Abe is a great reader; I didn't much approve of it at first, but my wife, his step-mother, who sees things further than

I do, insisted on the boy having his own way. He is a great arguer, and you should just hear him hold forth to the boys that hang around at Jones, the grocer, in Gentryville.

—Yes, sure, Abe is a great talker; he couldn't live if he hadn't a chance of spouting, now and then; I wish he would argue a little less, and help me with the work of the farm a little more,—put in his step-brother.

—Hush, John; I am sure you have nothing to complain of; Abe is the most obliging fellow, all around here,—advocated the mother.

—Yes, obliging to strangers, and ye women-folks, in particular, I ween.

—But, Johnny, when he does work. he works for two, or for half a dozen of you, as for that,—said the father putting in a good word for his own son, whom he by no means wished to see belittled in the eyes of the strangers present.

—But, you haven't told us yet what trade you intend to take up,—said the traveling woman, who began to take an interest in Abe, despite his gawky and rather uncouth appearance.

—Well, our boy has set himself a high aim in life,—replied the mother. You know nothing is impossible for a true-born American, if he only makes up his mind to get there. I don't say that he will succeed,—but there is something even in the trying, alone worth the trouble. Well, even his father has given in at last that he may study and prepare himself betimes—

—Yes,—interrupted the farmer, for I heard a very old man once say, that he had observed that the boldest and maddest schemes succeeded the best in the world.

—Well, because, you know, fortune favors the bold,
—Abe himself put in.

—Well, you see, ma'am, it isn't quite impossible,—for it is open to all,—he is actually studying—only studying—to become president,—continued the mother.

—President! Of what?—the woman inquired.

—Why, of the United States, to be sure,—the other replied calmly.

—President! Of the United States!—and the woman dropped the knitting she had in hand.

—Yes, is there anything wrong in that?—simply asked the confident spokes-woman.

—Why don't you all laugh?—Asked Abe.

—Well, 'tis only his fun, —nobody can ever make him out,—said John in rather a sarcastic tone.

—Yes, Abe is droll at times,—spoke his sister Sally, but he is such a good fellow;—nobody is in it, compared with him,—she continued, eyeing John askance, and pouting her lips just a wee bit saucely. And I am sure he is the president of all the boys in Gentryville already, and as for that, for miles around. And there is nobody as strong as our Abe, and they know it; I will speak up for my brother Abraham, I will; he will be a great man yet, when all other boys will be sticking in the mud still. Depend upon it.

—Hush, child, you shouldn't be so positive. Man proposes and God disposes,—the mother admonished her.

—I hope He will feel disposed, then, to make me a president.

—Young man, don't tempt the Lord,—said the stranger woman warning.

—I didn't mean to, only I thought that God might

make me as good a president as any, for in reading much of their history, and absorbing it all, I might just begin where they left off, guided by the experience they have accumulated. See!

—What a boy you are, to be sure! Well, well,—go on with your studies, though books are hard to get in these far-away parts;—if it comes to nothing else it serves to keep the lad out of mischief,—said his father.

—Knowledge is power,—quoth Abe.

—And talk is cheap,—added Jonn.

—Yes, I don't mean to charge anything for my orations. I believe knowledge should be disseminated free to all—to all that have ears to hear.

—Yes, and the right heart to understand,—added the mother, ever anxious to take Abe's part.

—Why don't you speak up for the niggers then, too, and make them masters of us?—asked the irate teamster.

—I wouldn't make them masters, but give them equal rights, or else it is a mockery to acknowledge all Christians as our brethren. I shall speak up for them some day, when the right time comes. I would *rather be assassinated, than surrender the great principle of liberty to all men*, or connive at a great evil to attain some selfish end, whether for myself or the state,—said Abe with great determination.

A hush fell upon the small audience, although the effect was different upon the various listeners. It was as if an angel of peace, bringing a message of unutterable love, had passed through the room, and like Mary of old, the mother treasured the words of her gifted son in the core of her heart.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

.....they stopped and prepared their meals in our cabin. They had brought several books with them, and the lady read some stories to us, which I had never heard before. One of the girls quite took my fancy,.....

* * *

CHAPTER II.

Playmates.

The following morning both the mothers were up betimes preparing breakfast, for the travelling woman insisted upon furnishing some of the victuals she had brought with her. When the men, one by one, came down from the loft, the housewife expressed no little surprise at seeing Abe the last of all, and lagging considerably behind the others, too.

—Why, I am sure, I thought you had been over to Gentryville long before this to see about the wheel. They will be ready to start in an hour.

—The wheel won't be ready before noon, anyhow, so there's no hurry,—Abe replied.

—Besides Abe is scarcely awake yet, he has been lying awake all night, reading the book the lady lent him last night; I scarcely got a wink of sleep for him, burning his rush-light till dawn of day." amiable John complained.

Well, ain't they going to leave to day, and must'nt I have finished the book by that time?

—I can't see the necessity of that at all, and, Robinson Crusoe, from which she read aloud last night, what good will that do you?

—It will, at any rate, teach a fellow how to shift for himself, if left by fate in a desolate condition, how to turn every opportunity to the best account. You will live to need learning that, yourself, some day John; you are not over-thrifty.

After breakfast Abe jogged on slowly to Gentryville. At the corner of Jones' grocery he saw the usual lot of boys hanging about, as if expecting something to turn up. —Hallo! here's the president coming!—That was the nickname by which he went among his companions. —What's up, that you are in town so early?

—I am waiting for the wheelwright and the blacksmith to finish a job.

—What's the matter with the wheels in your head? Any of the cogs used up?

Oh, it's a lady's wheel.

—Oh, there's a woman in the case! Tell us all about it!

—There's nothing in it, I tell you boys; a broke-down wagon, that's all.

—With a lady in it? That's a great deal, Abe; take care you are not caught in the spokes,

—Have you seen "The Louisville Journal," just come by mail? They are raising a hellaballoo about the niggers down in Kentucky. There's an abolitionist-paper here that won't be squashed. We'll have some rare fun presently; the boys will be up in arms against each other,

the south and the north fighting for their lives which shall possess the ebony beauties, the lovely, plump mulatto girls. You ought to marry one, Abe. or a dozen of them, and move to the Pacific and raise a large family, a tribe of your own, over which you would become chief.

—I don't believe in the amatory intermixture of races or that is ever meant by nature, or she would never have divided us into races, but I believe in the amicable intercourse between them, and I venture to predict that at some future distant period, say 300 years hence, the negroes will dominate the south, for by that time they will not only have been emancipated, but their intelligence will have come abreast of the whites of that age, and they are much better fitted by nature to live under a broiling sun than the whites are.

—Hear, hear! the great negro emancipator!

—Yes gentlemen, I avow a *deep, unconquerable* hatred of that *peculiar institution* slavery, a hell upon earth, a sin, iniquitous and flagrant, enough to damn a nation, a downtrodden humanity, crying aloud to God every hour of the day for succor and redemption!

—Your father left Kentucky for that self-same reason; you must have been born with the hatred of slavery in your breast, one of his audience suggested.

—Or he is in love with some mulatto-girl, sneered another of the bystanders.

—Had you a negro woman for a wet-nurse? jeered a third of the crew.

—Abe pretended not to hear the irreverent taunts of the gang, but continued. Not only do I abhor the abject slavery of the blacks but I hate tyranny in any shape, and my heart bleeds for every oppressed creature on God's

beautiful earth, and my soul weeps for them when I think, that I am impotent to do anything for them,—and great, good God, no resources left for them but prayer,—no resources but prayer, he reiterated, excited and exalted.

—What is the use of praying?—queried one of them.

Abe looked at the interpolator for a moment, then replied:—What is the use of eating?

—What is the use of eating? Why we must eat to live.

—So we must pray to be able to *live* a spiritual life. I tell you boys when we come up to the dead, blank wall of the unknowable before us, and we have reached the end of our tethered reason, we, forsooth, sink into our boots,—into abjectness, and beat our brains in vain against the dead wall, as the Jews moaned of yore at the wall of lamentation in Jerusalem,—then I tell you, every mother's son of you, you will all turn to prayer as a last resource.

—Like whistling in the dark to keep your courage up,—one of the gang opined.

—Leave off, Charlie, Abe is all right, if confession is good for the soul, then prayer must be too, for that is the very quintessence of penitence and supplication.

—Nay, if you're going to preach, lads, I'll beg to be excused. I am going in for statecraft, not for priestcraft, and so I thought Abe was.

—And so I am, boys, but sometimes church and state will come in close proximity, as you know, although they disown each other in this free country, but it can't be denied that the state can't entirely ignore humanitarian subjects,—for if it did, what need would there be for any government for the happiness of the many?—Gentlemen I have done. I will say no more.

—Hurrah for the president!

—All of *our age* will look up to me yet—he said with an expression of humor in his eye, preparing to get down from the stand.

—How foolish you do talk, sometimes.

—And those of the *next age* still more so.

—Worse and worse.

—I guess they will. They must all look up to me, this and the next generation, for if I am so tall now, what won't I be when I am fullgrown, you bet, jested Abe with a deep meaning to himself. But I admit this is *tall* talk, he added with a quaint smile, forcing down the demon of ambition that felt tempted to rise within him.

Abe called at the blacksmith's to get the new wheel, on which the old tire had been fixed,—but on the road home, whenever he encountered any incline he took it in his head to run the wheel up-hill, just for the mere sake of illustrating to himself how to overcome any obstacle that might rise in his way, by the sheer impetus of his own will.

—Halloo there!

—Halloo!—Abe replied.

—Halloo there!—again came the common, merry salutation.

—Halloo!—again responded Abe, but he saw no one.

—Ha! Ha! Ha!—came a ringing laugh.

Abe looked all around, and finally he looked up at a tree by the roadside, from which the voice seemed to come, and there, sure enough, young Ann had climbed up, and sat comfortably, jammed in between a branch and the trunk of the tree, dangling her feet playfully about.

—I thought I would just go to meet you, but you were such a long time coming. I saw you running the

wheel uphill; no wonder it took you long time. I am used to that game, myself.—Help me down I daren't jump.—

—Whatever made you climb up so high?—

—Because you were so long time coming. I had to get up to have a clear wiew of the prairie around, If you were to hold the wheel high up to me, I might bend down and get hold of it, and you would swing me down like a fairy.

—And break your neck, or your legs; no, thank you, I won't be accessory to that. Let me think. Stop where you are. Cousin Dennis is working in the next field, I will just run and fetch him, and together we will get you down. Be sure and not *attempt* to get down, in the meantime.—Abe sped along on his long locomotives, to return with assistance in a trice.

Meanwhile Ann, to while the time away, began whistling snatches of some lively tunes, picturing to herself how it would feel to be a happy mockingbird perched in a high tree, and she sometimes whistled, sometimes laughed and sometimes sang, keeping things very lively for herself, and the other merry, little birds around her, in the neighboring trees, but which kept perfectly mute in sheer astonishment at the queer monster mockingbird they beheld partly screened by the foliage.

At last the boys came. Abe arriving first, and Dennis lagging a little behind, and the first greeting the jolly mockingbird gave was:—Is your name always Dennis?

—Now, you wicked, little mockingbird,—we heard in the distance how you imitated them,— will you now be careful, and do just as I tell you.? Here, I'll place myself with my back to the trunk of the tree;—you Dennis get on my shoulders, and also keep your back to the tree,—and you little lady-bird will try to step on to his shoulders,

and take hold of his up-stretched hands,—but do'nt attempt to flap your wings; no capers, please; now then, here we are. Up you go!

Dennis, agile as a coon, climbed up the tree, — and stood on Abe's shoulders, and he, sturdy as the stem itself, stood with his legs a little parted so as to maintain his steadiness, the picture of the young athlete he was, but the little mockingbird, so blithe and merry, could scarcely step on Dennis' shoulder, for she was laughing so immoderately in trying first one foot and then withdrawing it, trying the other.

—Now take hold of my hands,— said Dennis, holding them up,—and now dont be fooling, but step on to my shoulders. There you are; — now then, don't laugh, — gently down,— and Abe will receive you.

—Oh, this was nice; let us do it again!— she exclaimed when she had safely reached the ground.

—Oh, no, my lady fair, once in a time will do for a fairy flight like that,— said Abe, to prevent her from venturing up a second time.

—But you wo'nt tell mother, or anyone, that I climbed up the tree?

—Oh, no, we don't squeal — Dennis assured.— But what are you going to give us for helping you down?

—Give you? why, thanks, of course; many thanks!

—I think we are entitled to a kiss.

—A kiss! one—*between* you? Would that do?

—Well, if it were a big, long one, it might— Dennis answered.

—Then kiss each other— she said, to cheat them, and laughing, ran away, fleet as a hind in the forest.

—The two boys looked at one another, and laughed heartily also.

—She is a daisy—said Abe—I think I will go for my share; it may only be a slap in the face, though, for little vixens are flippant—but I should like to tame her though. And picking up the wheel he proceeded on his way homeward.

Dennis stood long looking after the two. — It sometimes begins that way, — he chuckled to himself. — Abe is evidently smitten with her, and a young thing in a short frock too! Well, well, I declare — and he turned down the field to resume his interrupted work. — It does a fellow good to see a little flirtation once in a while — and again he laughed heartily to himself, and the echo repeated the laugh, and a mocking-bird in the distance, this time a real one, took up the laugh, and laughed provokingly, and Dennis muttered to himself — and I am not in it, and she asked me if my name was always Dennis, and I am blowed if it ai'nt!

On Abe arriving at the cabin the wheel was soon adjusted and fixed to the wagon, and the travellers began to take their leave, expressing heartfelt thanks for the genuine hospitality they had enjoyed in that humble home, the women and girls promising each other at some near future time to renew the acquaintance, which might almost be said to unexpectedly have been knitted into firm friendship, not to allude to anything so premature as a love-knot.

During the stir of the leave-taking Abe found an opportunity to say to Ann in an undertone — you owe me still that kiss for helping you down, when you got up a tree. I'll come, and fetch it some day, soon.

Ann only gave a little laugh by way of reply, as much as to say: "Well, I don't object."

Abe stood long gazing after them, watching the prairie-schooner disappearing in the blue distance of the Buckthorn valley.

—What are you thinking of, Abe?—asked the step-mother, when she saw him standing there, as if transfixed.

—Oh, I was only thinking of a little butterfly that I saw flitting away over the meadow yesterday, when it nearly had been caught in a spider's web;—it was an opportunity lost to the rascally spider.

—Why, surely, Abe,—said the mother and looked searchingly into his eyes;—you are not fretting about that little butterfly that has just flitted over the prairie? You are only sixteen, and she only thirteen; for shame!

—That would be old for butterflies, wouldn't it?—said Abe, laughing and went away, down the hill, to milk the cow.

CHAPTER III.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

— . . . and when they had left I could not get her out of my thoughts, and one day, basking in the sun by our cabin, I worked out quite a little story in my mind. I imagined I took our horse and followed their track.—

* * *

Love-sick.

That night Abe went early up to his rude couch in the cock-loft; he tried to read, but his thoughts wandered frequently, and he couldn't fix his attention; he was wounded, "the little giant" felt the pain of love's darting shaft;—a lionine cub held captive by a child, and led by a mere ribbon,—he chafed,—laughed at himself,—chided himself,—spurned the idea,—but couldn't keep his thoughts from her,—a child, that ought to be whipped, and sent to bed for disobedience in climbing up trees,—besides, she knew nothing, couldn't possibly know anything, had nothing to recommend her,—nothing but a pair of pouting, rosy lips,—but they were uncommonly pretty, he must admit, and her eyes were merry, laughing eyes, that made one almost believe in perfect mundane happiness, but her nose, well, he was afraid it was a little tilted,—most likely it was.—for she was of a saucy

nature,—would have to be tamed like a wild kitten,—a squirrel,—his thoughts began to ramble, then to jumble, and finally he fell into an uneasy, fitful slumber.

He dreamt that he was a poor reformed negro-boy in Kentucky, madly in love with his haughty master's daughter, of wondrous beauty, that she passed by him in a garden, and dropped her glove for him, her slave, to pick up, which he did, and kneeling to her as a divinity, kissed the glove as he returned it to her, that she might know he loved her. Instantly her numerous white admirers fell upon him, and were dragging him away to be lynched, for his presumption in loving her, which they construed to be an insult, punishable with death. His forehead was clammy with cold perspiration when he awoke, and he was glad it was only a dream. He tried to read, but his thoughts wandered anew, and as it was getting towards morning, he arose, dressed himself, and went out in the chilly air of the gray dawn.

He passed by the tree which Ann had climbed, and sobered by the damp atmosphere he wondered how he for a moment could have been infatuated with that young stripling of a girl,—but somehow he looked back at the tree, and the whole athletic picture of the sportive young people stood clear to his mental vision, and he could have kicked himself for looking back, but it is needless to say that he did not do so, but only hurried his steps onward, as from a haunted place, but with no particular goal in view.

The small town of Gentryville was lying dull and unlighted yet in the dim distance, and the association of ideas brought to his remembrance how a young friend and companion of his, some time ago, had suddenly become demented, without any hope of ever recovering his reason,

and was now confined in a little cabin in the outskirts of the village. He would go thither, and seated on a tree-stump near listen to the snatches of plaintive songs the poor maniac solaced himself with between the intermittent hours of frenzy and troubled sleep. Someone had touchingly compared it to the fabled warblings of an expiring swan.

The uncanny, chill, and mystic gloaming of the early morn still wrapt the whole tract of land, when Abe reached the abode of idiocy; within that log-hut lay a human soul fettered in the toils and talons of an inhuman foe, lunacy, as if possessed by an evil spirit, as the Biblical traditions related of yore; here, indeed, had the human reason run the length of its tether, and battered wildly at the dark portal for admission into the unknown, to escape from the mind's and soul's imprisonment in the black void. And Abe unconsciously found himself repeating: "Great, and just, and merciful God,—and no resources left—no, not even prayer,—for the poor demented soul cannot even pray for itself. They say there are griefs so great that the heart shrivels up and can no longer bleed, and the cistern of tears drains dry. And all this woe in this world of ours, oh, I can understand now, young and inexperienced as I am, how Christ wept over the sins and sorrows of Jerusalem. No resources left, but prayer, and he cannot even pray for himself. What if I should volunteer my intercession? But of what avail? In things spiritual we must act for ourselves. Oh, how impotent I am, how poor, not even a tear to offer for my friend beloved."

He listened in vain for any signs of the poor, demented lad, he had heard him croon on several occasions, and felt deep sympathy for him, but this morn the sun

rose benign and blithe while the maniac still lay steeped in forgetful sleep, and Abe gradually returned homeward, taking himself to task for his wayward mood.

The morning air was exhilarating, and he felt his spirits reviving, and he turned down into the field, and helped John and Dennis haying. But when dinner-time came at noon, and he had his lunch, he stole out, round the corner of the house, and sat in the sun, meditating: whatever he attempted to do to divert his thoughts, whether by reading, or walking, or sympathizing, or manual work, it availed him naught, he could not keep that young girl out of his mind, and he had to give way to himself, and confess that he was actually in love at sixteen,—but, then, he was uncommonly developed, physically and mentally, for his age, so he thought he would compromise the matter by allowing to consider himself at least twenty,—the age most people took him to be, anyhow, on account of his size and his intelligence.

The effect of this compromise was that he pulled himself together, and acknowledged himself a young man, and would now look out for a wife. Ann, to be sure, was very young, but, of course, he wanted a young wife,—and they married very early in the rural districts,—and allowing some time for courtship,—the most delightful time in life, he was fully aware, that would bring her up to the period of maturity, and respectable age of matrimony. She was nearly fourteen now,—two years and a half more, that would make her fully ripe sixteen, quite the time—and Abe smiled to himself:—What a scheming codger you are, Abe!—He rose from the seat by the wall, where he had been basking in the sunbeams, which, perhaps, were in a way responsible for having fired his youth-

ful amatory imagination. He walked about a little, to and fro, in the same beaten path, as he were thrashing his brains for the right thing to do next, but once he had made up his his mind, the resolve would be put into immediate action.

—Very well, what is the next thing to do?—of course I must go and see my girl, and have a proper understanding.

He sat down again, and mused long and intently; he saw it clearly in his mind's eye; the sun the while nearly blinding him, and firing his blood to nearly fever heat, but still he sat there entranced by his own imaginative thoughts.

* *

He would take the horse, and track the woman and her daughters to South Creek camp, barely twelve miles distant, and return betimes in the morning, and no one at home would know anything about it. He would make a detour of Gentryville, for this was nobydy's business but his own, his own private affair, with which the boys, his political auditors, had nothing to do,—they were all very well to practice his stump-orations upon, but they must not be admitted into any confidence,—the sacred secret of love,—they would only jeer and laugh,—but his mother, for whom he had never concealed anything,—she who encouraged him in all his plans,—but then that little admonition at the departure of the butterfly Ann; it would be more prudent not to say anything about it just yet, not at any rate until after the..hm!—the betrothal.—Now, then, but where is our trysting place to be? At her father's half-face camp to be sure.—But what if the

girl won't have me?—and he stopped short,—such things do happen, and I am not a handsome fellow, but large, and rawboned and brawny,—pshaw! she is a mere child,—and I must train her,—we will be playfellows first, and lovers afterwards, and finally marry;—that, I have observed, have been the course elder ones have followed,—I must always profit by the experience of others, else what would be the use of studying, one way or another, from actual life, and from books.—Old hoss,—he said, on coming into the field to halter his favorite,—if you knew where you and I are going to-day, still you wouldn't tell, would you?—and he petted its neck, and the horse clipped its ears, as much as to say:—Hallo! What's up? Are we going to have a jolly long run? I like that.—Ah, my sweetheart,—said Abe coaxingly, and put his face to the side of the horse's head, as they do that love the dear, sensible and patient creatures,—I guess we are going to have a bit of adventure together, or what think you, Pegasus? This is my first trip on such an errand; we shall overtake them ere, maybe, they shift camp;—mind you, Bill;—yours are the only ears into which I confide my secret, I must perforce, for you will have to carry me there, and you may have to take us both for a ride:—wouldn't that be jolly?—in full stretch over the prairie,—fly by night,—on love's wings—ha! ha! my pretty one;—now, then, off we start;—but we will take the trail on the other side of the hill, and I'll wave my hand as we pass Gentryville in the distance, for the boys there ar'nt in it this time with me,—and you will be my trusty friend, all the time, won't you, Bill, dear boy?—And the horse and the boy understood each other,—of course they did,—they always do,—when love, not tyranny, holds the reins.

And off the two started at a gay trot on Abe's first trip a courting.

Abe knew the location of the South Creek camp, although a long way further to the north-west. It was a long stretch before him, and gave him ample time for reflection, to which he was habitually given. He read much, pondered over each salient point separately, and, so to say, labelled it, and put it away in the allotted pigeon-hole of his memory, which was the only way in the desultory manner of his reading, which the untoward circumstances forced him into, of systematically arranging a rich store-house of knowledge, from which to draw as occasion demanded. And in the same manner he treated the daily occurrences that seemed to be of any moment, in he crammed any little incident into some crevice of the shelves, to be utilized at some future occasion as an illustrative anecdote.

We have observed before that Abe was not much of a flirt,—few boys are at his age,—but that he was looked upon by everyone as much older than he really was, so that he thus really began looking upon himself as of age, and it therefore never occurred to him that he was rash, or premature, in setting out on an errand of love-making; he felt himself quite a young man, and a knowing one at that. He only chuckled to himself, now and then, as if he were having a joke with himself, on his ride, which soon took the nature of a slow trot, leaving old Bill to carry his master onward at his own equine mood and discretion, and Abe fell a-musing upon quite different things.

He had read how one teacher assured that were there is a will there is a way, and by that way self-made men

proved the truth of that axiom,—and that character was the basis on which one's fate in life depended;—but another sage of great repute maintained that no one really was the maker of his own future, but that everything depended upon circumstances or opportunities,—which was but another name for the dispensation of providence. It was almost impossible to say which of the two were right. Abe, of course, inclined to believe in self-made men, and that opportunities would present themselves, but here, now, he had come to a place on the prairie where the trail divided, the one diverging slightly to the left, and the other a little to the right. Abe stopped the horse, and considered for a moment,—perhaps in this, as in matters philosophical, which just then were uppermost in his thoughts, it would be best to take a middle course—strike out a new path for himself,—keeping both the slightly diverging lines in sight, and almost in contact. But after he had ridden for some little time on the new bee-line he was laying out for himself, and to which old Bill seemed certainly to object, he decided for the left course,—as the South Creek camp is in a north-westerly direction, and he couldn't be much out of his bearing in following that,—and he smiled to himself quite satisfied that if a man chose the strenuous self-conducted life, it wouldn't prevent providence from now and then throwing in a toward circumstance, which one might improve to a brilliant opportunity.

What old Bill mused on might be inferred later on when we observe how contentedly he followed the well-beaten path. He went by his own instinct, or common horse-sense, and Abe was equally content for a while to allow Bill to trot on at his own individual pleasure.

Now and then Abe awoke from his reverie, and urged Bill on by telling him that in this manner they wouldn't get there before nightfall, and that would be too late for a decent suitor to come on his first visit, and Bill began immediately to show some more decided interest in the trip they had undertaken. In this manner the man and the brute interchanged their friendly companionable feelings having a perfect understanding between each other, although they did not express themselves by the same means of utterance. But harmony, at any rate, existed betwixt their mutual communications. Love is as potent a power between man and brute, as between man and man, or rather as between man and women, for, like the latter, man and domestic animals are much given to caress one another.

Abe may be said to have had a premonition as he rode across the prairie and wooded hillocks, how he at some future time would like to survey all this land in a proper manner,—measure it, if only with a primitive grape-vine furlong, and divide it into townships and farming lots. What a splendid view the endless vista presented, inviting man from all the oppressed countries in Europe, to come here, and take possession for a mere old song of the boundless, undulating tracts, which seemed to smile at the prospect of cultivation, and the habitation by civilized man. The Indians had already retreated westward, and here the opportunity lay waiting for the countless hords of homeless, downtrodden denizens of the old world.

Abe felt grateful, and almost proud, at heart, that he was one of the pioneers of civilization in the trackless land spread out before him, where the water-courses as yet were the only highroads of communication. He held in

his reins, doffed his hat, and seated on horseback though he was, he poured out a fervent prayer of gratitude to the generous maker of all this abundant country, and the sun, which was just beginning to set, suffused the land with a golden and roseate shimmer, as if indicative of the wealth and love which there lay latent waiting for the immigrants to be therewith blessed,—and he sang aloud to himself, and all surrounding, listening nature,—and his equine friend pricked its ears in token thereof,—sang with his deep, sonorous voice, from the fullness of his heart, a hymn, which his own mother had taught him while he was a mere child, nestling at her knees.

It spoke of God's love to man, as revealed by all nature, and he felt as if the angelic spirit of his mother had moved by his side in the still evening, and smilingly approved of this trip to confide to so young and innocent a heart the holy secret of his first love,—the slumbering, heaven-born spark,—the gift of every mortal, the first kindling of the sacred fire, which was confided to every vigorous, manly youth, and virgin, pure and innocent as a vestal.

There among that cluster of trees curled the smoke of a camp-fire; he had arrived at his goal somewhat sooner than his slow pace had allowed him to anticipate,—and he held in his reins once more, and his heart beat almost audibly,—how would he broach the subject,—he smiled, the only way for a shy, bucolic swain would be to say nothing at all about it, but just wait, and chance or opportunity, would present itself. After that decision he alighted with a light heart, tied his horse to a tree, and did not forget to pat its neck, and whisper confidentially:—Now, then, here we are! I feel not a little queer about

it,—I wish, old friend, you could help me out of it. And the horse gave a slight neigh, as much as to say:—We'll see about it.

Abe felt strange at heart, and almost a little shaky on his legs, but the neighing of the horse,—which simple country-folks always construed as a special greeting of welcome,—had attracted attention in the little half-face camp,—the die was cast,—there was nothing but to proceed on love's foolish errand.



CHAPTER IV.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

—and succeeded in finding them at last, and they were all surprised to see me so soon again. I found an opportunity of talking with the girl alone.

* * *

Knight-errantry.

—There's a man on horseback just arrived at the camp,—said the father,—who can that be?—There ar'n't many men about here, and I almost know them all by this time,—but I don't seem to be able to place this one. He is coming up the path just now.

—A stranger,—said the mother, in whom we recognize our traveling lady-friend.—Perhaps a man seeking work.

—Oh, no, he wouldn't come on horseback.

—A visitor, at any rate; he's just in time for supper,—remarked the wife.

—Not know him! Why, mother, 'tis Abe, I'm sure! —ejaculated Ann, with love's quick instinct.

—Abe? What Abe? Who is he?—asked the father.

—Why, Abe, you know,—and the little vixen colored slightly while she added:—Don't you know, Abe, that

got our wagon mended when it broke down, and where we stopped over night? Why, I am so glad,—and she flew to meet him.—Why, how are you, Abe?—and she took hold of both his hands, for one wasn't sufficient in the *exuberance* of her heart,—we might almost have said *folly*, for it beat already a little responsive to his own anxious palpitation.

—Why, Master Abraham, who would have thought to have seen you so soon?—exclaimed the mother.—I am so pleased to meet you, however. How are all the folks at home? I hope nothing ill has happened.

—Thank you, they are quite well, all;—he felt the words almost choking him, simple though they were.

—This is my husband, Master Abraham; we can't sufficiently thank you for all your kindness and trouble; the wheel is splendid.

—I am very glad to meet you, young man, and thank you heartily for your kind attention to my wife and children. You see, our cabin is scarcely ready yet, so I couldn't send for my folks much earlier, and if the weather remains fine, which I think it will, we'll all sleep in the camp-tents yet for a couple of nights, or so.

—But where is May? Ann, run and call your sister!—ordered the mother.—She is tending the little pigs and chickens, mother,—she'll be here immediately,—replied young Ann, for she did not feel inclined to leave Abe, her playmate in the equilibristic jump from the tree, just the moment he had arrived; and when her mother gave her a look, as much as to say:—I expect you to obey me,—Ann, who rightly interpreted the glance, pouted her lips with:—she'll be here in a moment, mother. There she comes; I told you so.

The supper spread on the ground, in front of the principal tent, and consisting chiefly of vegetables, such as corn-cobs, mush, sloe, and potatoes, Irish and sweet,—being over, the father took the young visitor for a stroll to show him in the still dim light the environs, and the fine prospect that lay before them. Abe knew something already about the neighborhood for his paternal uncle Mordecai had lived for some time at a settlement some few miles further away; and he harbored some slight intention of looking him up while out on this little trip. The settler found Abe a very pleasant young man,—a little reserved and guarded in his conversation, he thought, but that would wear off on better acquaintance. The fact was Abe couldn't help feeling a little sheepish at first, conscious of the secret errand that had brought him there, and in the innermost recesses of his mind he was hatching a deep, dark, hazardous and adventurous plan, which as yet he scarcely dared to admit to himself,—but when the fatal passion once had taken possession of him he gave himself totally up to its fascinating allurements.

Who should have thought it? Abe, the just, the noble-minded, the tender-hearted, was actually plotting in his mind, —I can scarcely write it down, and would not do so, if he had not recorded it himself,—yes, Abe was planning to—elope with Ann.

And here he was walking with the father, chatting amicably,—and his mind all the time intent upon the sinister deed, and Abe was not at all romantic, but of a jocular turn of mind, when not concentrated upon some great patriotic or philanthropic themes;—but then, after all, he was only a premature boy of sixteen, and when the fatal master-passion once had taken hold of him, it did so so

completely, that he almost writhed in agony under its firm grip. He had been playing with the sacred fire until a conflagration threatened to consume him.

He did not know how soon to get rid of the father, and confer with his young lady-love. That she loved him, in her own childish, inexperienced, and impulsive way, he felt sure; a meeting glance of their eyes had told him that, a responsive wave of yearning love had met and interchanged and intermingled, "such as soul to soul affordeth." The plain truth was that Abe was madly in love, experiencing the first delirium of that intoxicant, and nothing less than possession, he thought, would satisfy him, that is possession of the certainty that she would be his for life. Strong natures suffer invariably more agony when the fierce flame has taken hold of them. With them it seems a case of life and death, while weaker natures content themselves with a lukewarm feeling.

The long expected opportunity occurred,—when the moon,—aye the lovers' friend,—rose over the horizon, and invited to a charming stroll along the banks of the little streamlet, that meandered among the knolls and meadows,—a kind of silver streak to follow in the labyrinth of the glamorous monlight patches, and fantastic shadows of the trees, whimsical streaks of scintillating aquatic silver, which, with the gentle rustle of the leaves, seemed as if they were the suppressed laughter, and soft whisperings of the elfin world, invisible, but ever present, enticing the youthful lovers to follow its erratic course,—a water-sprite will-o'-the-wisp that wouldn't stay its onward course until it reached the haven of all restless souls,—the boundless ocean,—the image of eternity.

The father of his own inclination soon retired into

his tent to rest after a day of incessant toil, but the mother, who was yet, though unconsciously, susceptible to the poetry of sylvan life, herself proposed that she with her children should take a moonlight walk, if Master Abraham did not object, and was not too tired after his long ride on horseback.

Of course Abe scorned the idea of being tired, so off the four started along the rippling creek, the two girls in advance, and Abe with the mother sedately behind, carrying on a languid converse about the farm products of the settlement, though the woman inwardly really reflected more upon the beauty of the landscape, which also possessed the double interest of being new to her, and destined to contain her rural, future home, while Abe was impatiently beating his brains between the brief, polite rejoinders, how he could get rid of the old dame, and snatch an interview with merry, little Ann.

At last a chance presented itself, for Ann ran away ahead, turning her head back and speaking as she ran, telling the others that she would just run on a little bit to find where there was that ford to the other bank of the stream, which she had seen the day before in the distance, for the other side, she was sure, was much prettier. Away she darted, and the mother exclaimed:—Dear me, that girl will be death of me! She never hesitates, or asks leave, but runs madly on. The ford is sure to be a dangerous place.

No sooner had the anxious words passed the maternal lips, before Abe,—like an arrow, shot after one that is lost, that it may indicate the whereabouts of the other one, —also disappeared in the same direction.—I'll overtake

her, and see she gets into no mischief,—he called out, running on.

When Abe reached the ford, Ann was already merrily skipping over the large stepping stones that had been placed there to facilitate getting across, and it was only his long legs, and firm determination, that made him overtake her, while she stood laughing at him on the very central stone, the water coursing rapidly between all the displacing obstacles. And Abe was not slow to profit by the golden opportunity, but jumped agile on to the place, and boldly clasped her in his arms, and—kissed her? No, he didn't, he had too much self-respect for that,—he only held her firmly, preventing her from wriggling into the stream.

—Now, yon little elfin, I have caught you at last!

—Oh, you wouldn't take advantage of me just now,—to make me give you what I—owe you. If you do, I'll scream!

—Don't be silly, I don't want you to give it to me until you do so of your own free will. But I want to talk to you for a moment before the others come up.—Listen, Ann, it is for your sake I have come here, and I have been watching this chance of speaking to you.—Ann, my darling girl, I love you with my whole soul. Will you be my wife?

—Here, this instant?—she jested with a merry laugh in her eye.

—Well, I want your promise now.

—I dare not!

—Is that all?

—I might, but I dare not, I am too young.

—Yes, I know, to marry,—but not to promise; besides,

you need not be afraid,—we'll keep the secret to ourselves. Your mother and May will be here in an instant;—will you promise?

—No, no!

—I am too ugly?

—No, no!

—What is your reason, then?

—I have no reason; I only feel I mustn't.

—Now you spoke like a true little woman. Feeling, not reason guides a female heart. Shall I see you again alone?

—Yes, yes!

—When?

—When I have grown up.

—Oh, I can't wait.

—To morrow—week.

—Nonsense; I can't stay!

—Let me go!

—I shan't until you tell me when I may speak to you without any witnesses.—Ann, my love,—I mean business, that is I mean to marry you, later on, when you yourself fix the time.

—If you don't let me go I'll jump into the stream.

—No, you little vixen, you shan't, while these strong arms hold you. I suppose you expect me to say that then I would jump into the water too, but I am too sensible, Ann, no nonsense about me.—When I say I want you to be my wife, I mean so.

—My feet are getting wet.

—Will you answer yes or no, or I'll duck you like a witch,—that one would almost take you to be,—for you have bewitched me, anyhow. I will take no refusal,—

for here the others come,—prepare yourself to meet me late to-night; I'll saddle my horse, and take you for a ride over the prairie.

—A ride! That will be nice;—you needn't duck me, I'll come. Now I would give you a kiss for promising me a ride, but I daren't just now, for there's mother and May coming along the bank on the other side.

—But where shall I meet you?

—I'll sneak down to the pig-sty.

—Sneak, Ann?

—Yes, of course;—you wouldn't have me dance down the path, would you?

—But why the pig-sty, darling?

—Because nobody would think of looking for us there.

—No, I hope not. What a child you are, and how cute!

—Whatever are you young folks doing so long standing in the middle of the stream?—asked May from the other side.

—Why, contemplating the beautiful moonshine prospect before us, to be sure,—Abe drolly replied with a merry twinkle in his eye, for now he began to feel a little more at ease,—and pretty sure of his quarry.

It was quite a sight to see Abe helping Ann back over the slippery stepping stones, she pretending to need his assistance, and mimicking the manners of some grand dame she might have seen in some pictures,—but on coming to the last stone, jumping unaided ashore, and running up the somewhat steep bank laughing merrily.

—And so you thought you caught me this time,—but you didn't!

Abe felt uneasy for a moment,—whether she meant to break her promise, and, worst of all, tell of his proposal, and their intended nocturnal ride, and he felt qualms of conscience too, as well he might, for he still recollected his mothers words—and you only sixteen, and she only thirteen! For shame!

They returned by another route through the wood, following an old Indian trail, and May more than once startled and gave a slight cry, when some unwonted sound struck her ear;—but they were of wild fowl, or animals, and the abrupt shades of huge stems in the bright moonlight involuntarily caused her to shudder, for she was of a more romantic and sensitive trend than her younger sister, and she could not help picturing to herself the possibility of suddenly encountering some stray Irroquois or Black-Hawk Indian, who might still linger in his old haunts,—but the redskins had departed, forced westward by civilization, only leaving throughout the country an impress of their aboriginal rights, as in this very name of Indiana, and in the names that still cling to a thousand and one places, investing them all with the atmosphere of Indian warlike romance,—of times happily passed away.

CHAPTER V.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

— . . . and persuading her to elope with me that very night, I did so,—and put her on the horse behind me, and sat out over the prairie. When we had ridden a considerable time, we came to a camp, and found it was the one we had started from; however we entered.

* * *

Elopement and Animal Instinct.

When they arrived at their little half-face camp, the mother seated herself on a bowlder under a tree; and her two daughters nestled up to her, while Abe stood in front of them expecting to say good night, and retire. He had told them that he intended to be up, and, perhaps, away, early in the morning, to look up his uncle Mordecai, but that he might call again on his return home.

The mother folded her hands in prayer, and the children knelt on each side of her, with upturned faces, the moon shining bright upon the beautiful group, canopied by two outstretched limbs of the tree; from which the foliage hung in ample festoons, as if a Hama-dryad were rendering a sylvan benediction; it was a picture which would have gladdened the eye of any artist, of a religious bent of mind, whether a painter or a sculptor, but which

made Abe feel abashed of himself for a moment; yet, he nerved himself by reasoning,—Bah! She will get over it, we will return penitent, be forgiven, and all will be well,—and the girl will aye remain mine!—But when the mother began pouring out a fervent prayer of gratitude for the recent reunion of the family, and imploring kind providence still to bless and protect them, Abe's heart winced as if under the lashes of a scourge, and he had well nigh given up his secret purpose, which now appeared to him almost in the light of sacrilege, if the neighing of his horse had not for the moment attracted his attention, and made him remember the silent compact between himself and his equine friend, that the latter should carry him out of all danger consequent upon his daring love-escapade. A semi-religious hush followed upon the mothers heartfelt outpourings, during which Abe held his breath as if fearing to mar the sanctified moment, and in so doing, he thought he listened to the awful silence of the woodlands, whis is more felt than oterwise perceived, and all surrounding nature seemed to reveal to him the yearning *weltsmertz*, the impressions of life and sufferings and death,—when suddenly the joyous strains of a mocking-bird rung through the copse, and thrilled Abe's susceptible heart with the responsive throb of amorous feeling, and faintly suggested to him that he also must soon be on the wing, and seek a sylvan home, or nest, for himself and his young mate.

Their silence was broken by the mother kissing her children tenderly and bidding them good night. Then she rose, and the girls retired to their own little tent, close to that of their parents. The wife lifted the canvass curtain, and entered into her own and husband's dormitory, once more turning round with a sweet "god night" to Abe,

who kept at a short respectful distance before repairing to a small shed a few steps aside, where the two farm-laborers already were breathing heavily, steeped in deep sleep after their day of toil.

Abe approached with hesitating steps the sleeping-place assigned to him, once more revolving in his mind his reprehensible intent,—when the neighing of his horse again called to him from afar, as if to remind his master that he was awake, and impatiently waiting,—and the love-escapade which he had first conceived in the boyish spirit of a jolly lark,—a true American daring adventure, in which the times abounded,—had now gradually fashioned itself into a bold reality,—an opportunity which he had himself created, and which he now must seize by the forelock of the time. His heart and pulse beat double quick time, and urged him frantically on.—He turned on his heel,—victorious temptation veered him round, and he stood long as if transfixed to the spot, while tumultuous passion raged within; it was the rebellion of his youthful, hot blood scaling the ramparts of his cool reason, which he had thought, and flattered himself, were so well fortified by strict morality;—a cowardly hoistening of the white flag,—virtue capitulating,—when the anarchistic red blood rushed madly onward to the siege. Love's first triumphant war-cry made him dizzy,—and he acted as one that has been hypnotized by the mischievous little love-god, as all do when under his fatal influence, and he obeyed all his insidious and imperative suggestions.

First he bent on one knee close to the side of the tent where the girls slept,—and there he listened, again with suspended breath,—their suppressed talk had ceased,—they were evidently asleep,—but presently a slight cough

was heard,—some one was likely awake. Was it a signal? Another cough. Quite awake, he was sure. Was it Ann? Most likely. But how was he to ascertain? He put his head close to the canvass to listen. A hand on the inside felt all over his face, and grabbed hold of his big nose.

—Oh, darling, don't!

A suppressed titter only responded.

—Is that you?—he softly whispered.

—Hush!

—Are you coming?

—At the pig-sty, I told you,—she cautiously replied.

—I'll wait for you.

—Be off!

—But are you sure to come? Now's the time.

—Don't wake anybody, and I'll come!

—Come, my love!

—Hush!

Abe retreated with slow and wary steps, partly afraid, and partly emboldened by the success so far of his adventure;—but the pig-sty,—what a trysting-place,—enough to mar the charm of it all, and daunt the spirit of a more romantic lover than Abe was; he always hugely enjoyed the ludicrous, and this was droll in the extreme, so much so, that he actually laughed to himself at the situation, although he was much agitated. The waiting in the shadow of the contemned pig-sty seemed an eternity to him, and when the frolicsome and winsome girl at last came down the path, carrying her shoes in her hand, —barely decently dressed, he began rating her for keeping him waiting there two hours.

—Why, Abe, I haven't been ten minutes,—I had to dress so very cautiously,—indeed, I have been putting on

some of my things coming along. for I daren't stop to do it all in the tent, for fear May might awake.

—Well, my darling, come along now, the horse is waiting down by the pond.

And the two began running along the bridle-path, —first love's mad career in the alluring moonlit night.

—You will take me for a ride? How far?—she asked.

—As far as you like, my little love.

—How soon will we be back? Before sun-up?

—Oh, some time—soon.

—And father won't whip me?

—Oh, no!

—And mother won't scold me?

I guess not; they might only shake their heads a little, and say that the young people nowadays are more bold, and considerably more forward than what they used to be when they were young. Here's the horse. I must get up first, myself, and then help you up behind me.

—I can get up myself, from this big tree-stump.—I'm used to riding.—Now clasp me tight around the waist, and hold to me firm, and away we go!—he said.

—Oh! this is fine;—I haven't had a ride for ever so long. Father's horses are never at liberty. But I will, though, sometime in the fall.

As they rode out over the prairie, Abe looked up at the sky, and he thought for a moment that the moon looked aghast at seeing the youngsters setting out on their jaunt, but Abe only smiled inwardly to himself, and muttered half aloud:—All right, old man in the moon—we are just only having a bit of a lark;—we will return some time,

kiss, and make up with the old folks, and all will go as merryly as a marriage bell.

—What are you saying?—queried Ann,—who is going to have marriage-bells?

—Why you and I, of course, in a sense.

—How jolly;—you never told me that.

—Did I not? But its quite natural, isn't it?

—Well, I suppose it is, since I don't know anybody else,—I mean any other boy that I might like as well.

—Cling to me fast, or you will fall off the horse.

She obeyed him instantly.—I feel your heart beat, Abe, what a big heart you have got.

—Dont you think there is room in it for you?

—Oh, yes, indeed;—and you'll be good to me?

—I'll be as good to you as your mother; I can't promise anything better than that.

—But, dear me, what will mother say?

—Why,—bless you, my children,—she'll say.

—But where are we going, Abe? Ain't you going to turn soon?

—Not for some time yet;—I thought we might give uncle Mordecay a call, and you might stay with him for a little.

—A little? Why? For how long?

—Why, for some weeks, or a couple of years.

—Why, are you mad, Abe? You ain't carrying me off, are you?

—No, my darling, we're only eloping together, real high fashion, you know.

—If you don't let me off, Abe, I'll scream!

—What is the use of screaming out on the prairie? There isn't a soul near for miles round.

—Well, Abe, I never thought you were such a villain!

—I would never have dreamt it, myself, my dear, little love,—but the fact is passion makes us desperate, and sure enough we are off together to be man and wife after some little time.

—You spoke of two years; do you call that a little time? I suppose you will keep me a prisoner in your wigwam until that time.

—I am no Indian, Ann, but I am right glad you think that time long, since it shows you care a little for me.

—Well, I suppose I must be your prisoner, then, since you won't let me off.

—No, Ann, it is you who have captivated me;—I won't be your slave, for I hate slavery, but we will just jog on life's merry jaunt together. Here now goes for a trot,—and off the sped at double-quick time over the prairie.

—But, surely, Abe,—she said after they had been riding again in silence for a considerable time, and hugging him still more closely,—you'll turn now, won't you? The moon has gone down, it's very dark, and I am getting frightened.

—And I am getting hungry, for I couldn't eat much at supper with that load on my conscience.

—What load, Abe?

—Why, our elopement, to be sure. But the worst is it is getting so dark, that I don't know my bearings, and I can't see the track.

Said she, after a slight pause:—Why don't you loose the rein, and let the horse find his own way; he's sure to follow the trail.

—A very good suggestion, my little wife; don't you

see, now, how necessary it is that man and wife should stick together, and give one another good advice?

—I really think you would make me a very good husband, Abe,—she said, and squeezed him still a little tighter.—What a pity we have to wait so long!

—Two years and a half, at least, it seems an eternity to me.

—Does it, Abe? I am so glad it does; it shows you must love me very much.

Abe did not reply, but raised her right hand, and bending low, kissed it.

—Oh, Abe, I love you ever so much; I'll follow you anywhere!

—What was that?—asked Ann after a time, as a shooting star attracted her eye.

—An angel darting through the air to guide us on our path;—love's radiant messenger from above.

—Oh, how beautifully you speak, Abe; you ought to have been a preacher.

—No, I wouldn't make a good one; I can't speak by rules laid down for me; I am too independent; I have my own way of talking people down.

—Yes, I heard that the people of Gentryville like very much to hear you talk, Abe.

—Not more than I like to talk, myself. Somehow I must have got the gift of the gab,—little one,—and I see things either in a droll way,—in a ludicrous aspect,—or else I am aflame within, and feel myself towering over all others to such a tremendous height that I could topple over, and crush them all,—but I never fall, somehow I always keep my balance, and after I have talked them over to my views I always come out victorious.

—And that's how you have talked me over too; you may perhaps think it funny what came to my mind just now: that I shall always look up to you as a tower of strength, and regard myself as the ivy clinging to it,—quoth Ann from her copy-book.

—See!—Abe replied,—we are getting on famously together,—you are catching my spirit, and the lovely, little tendril may adorn the knotty stem.

—But, I say, Abe,—almost whispered the captive maiden,—that clump of tree is awfully like the copse at home; at least as far I can see in the dark.

—And I think I can see some tents under the trees, that really looks....

—Surely, Abe, the horse must have followed the trail that lead us back.

—I guess he has;—oh, you old rascal,—continued Abe, patting the horse's neck.—Well, perhaps it is just as well, as we hadn't brought anything with us. Here I'll let you down. Now, give me that kiss you have owed me so long; I couldn't take it while we were riding, for then, you know, you would have turned my head entirely. Now steal quietly into your tent,—and say nothing of our adventure to anyone. I'll stay over to morrow, and we'll plan it better next time. Good night, my own little darling!

—No, no kiss just yet, Abe, next time!—and away she darted up the hill, and disappeared among the brush-wood, taking a near cut to the tent.

—Well, well, so the girl has fooled you after all;—the ruce of a women,—however young,—will surpass the sense of a man any day, and when allied with the instinct of an animal,—the two are sure to carry the day, but I

won't be fooled a second time. To-morrow night I'll have it planned all right. Dear me, I am quite tired,—he said, and stretched out his huge, long limbs,—I sat so stiff in the saddle, I couldn't move for that tight embrace of hers;—love-making is rather hard work on horse-back, I find,—and he yawned,—actually yawned hugely, as if quite untouched by love's irritating barb.—He tied up his horse, patted it once more on the neck, grimly smiling to himself,—You rascal, you, you were in league with the girl; I thought it was me you were to help.—So-o-o-o I-i-i-i de-e-e-d,—neighed the horse. Then Abe quietly went up to the laborer's shed to sleep, and dream of his first love-adventure, that had terminated so ingloriously in the dark to him, he thought.



CHAPTER VI.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

— . . . *That very night we sat out again on our jaunt, but the exact thing happened over again, for the horse returned to the identical camp, and then we drew the inference that it was not meant we should elope. I remained with them until her father gave his consent to our union.*

* * *

Second Elopement and Common Horse-Sense.

The next morning when they were all having breakfast one of the hired men said:—You was late turning in last night, or, rather, early this mornin', Master Abraham, for the rooster crowed shortly afterwards.

—Yes, I had a run over the prairie; it was such a lovely night; I sometimes take a fancy like that.

Ann who was serving at table, and had a dish with steaming, hot cakes in her hand, held her breath, and looked askance over her shoulder at Abe.

He met her glance, but managed to maintain an expression of perfect indifference, and neither betrayed by the slightest movement of any facial muscle the mutual secret of their nocturnal escapade.

Nor had sister May in her sleep observed that Ann's

place by her side had been vacant the greater part of the night, for happy youth aye sleeps heavily and peacefully.

Abe helped the farmer during the day in splitting rails for a rustic fence, and the latter expressed his admiration of the great dexterity his young friend displayed in handling the axe for that purpose. Abe only smiled, and made one of his droll remarks that:—splitting them was quite a quick and easy thing compared with the slow and laborious way of making them grow, and the very opposite of uniting, but that by uniting what once had been split, one was enabled to fence in quite a large field for one's own future crop.—Of course the farmer had not the faintest idea of the sly political allusion, but it worked all the same with the would-be future politician and present rail-splitter.

In the afternoon the girls and Abe went blackberrying. When in the act of gathering fruit from the same bush the young lovers found an opportunity of exchanging a few words with regard to their pending second venture the next night.

Ann, my daisy, you'll meet me to-night at the same trysting-place?

—Behind the pig-sty, I know; nasty smell,—she added with a roguish smile.

—But you won't let me wait long?

—You will just have to bide there till I can get away. 'Tis no easy thing, I tell you.

—What are you two whispering about?—May put in from behind the next shrub; as she was the elder sister, she of course considered herself a kind of guardian angel, and with the strict morality obtaining in the semi-puritan family she would not allow the slightest suspicion of a

flirtation to take place. Whether she would have been as strict with regard to herself we leave to be inferred from the reader's knowledge of human nature in general.

—Whispering?—Do you want to know?—Very badly? teased Ann.

—Some of your pranks, I suppose,—retorted the custodian.

—We're only planning to give you all a little surprise.

Abe looked up at the girl in blank astonishment. What was she about?

—What is it?

—Wait and see!

May looked at her with her large, soft eyes,—scrutinizing the little vixen, but the latter merely pouted her lips, and with a toss of her head seemed only to tilt her nose a little more in defiance.

Abe felt deeply interested in the contents of his basket, sorting out those berries that seemed to be over-ripe, but he chucked out a few more than was really necessary, to prolong his posture of bending low, to hide his conscious blush, which might have fed the sister's suspicion.

—Well, I suppose we shall know in time;—your pranks, or larks, are always premature, anyhow. But master Abraham is your confidant, he, perhaps, will tell me?

—Oh, I never betray a trust,—Abe replied politely.

After a slight, painful pause May asked sophistically: —Then you wouldn't repeat anything I would tell you in confidence?

—certainly not!—replied he.

—Very well, then, I think you two are a couple of good-for-nothings, that won't let me into your secret. You are well mated you two.—There was a slight suspicion of tears in her voice.

—Ah, well, you know, Miss May, that two is company, and three is none. But I shall keep my word, and not betray your confidential communication that we,—Ann and I—are well mated, so you don't betray the secret yourself.

—Well, I'm sure, a hoyden and an over-grown boy, what a pair you would make!

—Stop now, there, Ann, I'm sure, is no hoyden, only she happens to look at things in a merry mood,—as all young girls ought to,—and as for myself,—I am already a man, for, your see, I am really so huge and take such big strides, that I have outstripped my own age, and am thus in advance of time.

—Ha! ha! ha! Well, you are the drollest fellow I ever met, so I want be cross with you long. You go on whispering; 'tis only silly things at the best; I shan't listen.

—No, don't, May, for they never hear any good of themselves that listen,—retorted Ann with quite an air of superior wisdom about her.

The badinage happily dwindled away, as they all wended their way homeward, where a substantial evening meal awaited them, prepared in their absence by the hands that never tires,—a loving mother's.

The day waned, and at last moonlit night came,—love's privileged period,—when they two again would start on their erratic journey. They experienced much less compunction about their undertaking this time, for after

their trial-trip they felt already quite inured to the idea of an elopement, as if their young, unsophisticated hearts indeed had been hardened to the effect their flight might have upon their families. And yet what heart could have been softer, or more noble than Abe's, when not under the baneful influence of an unbridled passion,—and as for Ann, the little thoughtless hoyden, who would not forgive her, after first, however, having administered to her a good, sound, wholesome, old-fashioned whipping, and then sent her to bed to heal her wounds of heart and other sensitive extremities.

But the die was cast; they must, perforce, give themselves up to love's frolicsome injunctions.

It was a cold night, and the moon veiled her beauty occasionally with the lace of flimsy clouds, as if coquettish with the powers of darkness that seemed to be dominant that hour,—or, perhaps, it was with gallant, distant Mars, whose star was in the ascendant,—but, at any rate, her smiles were fitful,—like the gusts of wind that at times stirred the long grass and luxuriant foliage, like silent trumpet blasts bidding nature to prepare for a war with the elements.

But the young lovers observed it not, or if they had done so, would not have heeded it, for their hearts were aglow, and they saw only visions of a pastoral, happy future, where radiant love tinged everything with its roseate color,—and youth eternal seemed to reign for ever,—for inexperienced boys and girls in their teens see no further than their noses. “A lame and impotent conclusion,” but quite the pessimistic truth for all that.

—Hist! Are you there?—whispered Ann when she had arrived at their trysting-place.

—Yes, love.

—I have brought a bundle.

—Good. We'll strap it to the horse. Now my own little girl,—said Abe, holding her in his huge embrace, —with this kiss on your brow I promise you to treat you like a little lady, although you may have to work, and keep my "wigwam" tidy.

The moon did not put in an appearance when they mounted the horse, and Abe thought that the man in the moon might have showed his face, to countenance their love, and wink at their elopement. But no; it was dark above this time.

Abe had resolved to take another route to Uncle Mordecai's this time, and so that Bill might not be induced to play off any more of his friendly tricks on his young master;—but the sky appeared like a thick, impenetrable wall in the direction he had fixed upon. After riding for some short distance,—at what might be called old Bill's contemplative pace, a slight muttering, as of disapproval, was heard from above, and mighty Jove blinked his eye,—but what a transcendant glance,—it span the whole horizon, and made Abe for a moment involuntarily hold in the reins, or, perhaps, the horse itself stopped of its own accord, startled at the magnificence displayed before it, for we often observe how the animals take cognizance of any unwonted effect in nature,—particularly in the sky, and when the heavy roll of thunder was heard from afar Bill clipped with his ears sagaciously, and when the first heavy drops fell admonishingly his equine nature made itself evident, for he lay his ears viciously back, and his whole flesh quivered as if he had received an electric shock. Bill was thereby evidently put on his metal.

An Olympian broad-sword combat in the welkin continued with unabated force, and the electric flashes, created thereby, darted in all directions, and by their brilliancy nearly blinded beast and man. Poor Ann clung to her protector, and hid her affrightened countenance behind his broad back. The boy patted the horse on the neck, and in a half-hearted way tried to urge it on,—but old Bill had a mind of his own, and when the next clap of thunder came as a furious message to the plain, and the creatures thereon, the horse rose on its hindlegs, as if struck with awe, or with an equine translation of *sauve qui peut*, veered round with its precious burden, and with its ears close to its head, bolted in a straight bee-line for the home they had but just left.

—For Heaven's sake, cling to me, Ann, firmly; the horse has bolted, I can't hold it!

.....

Meanwhile all in the little half-face camp had been awakened by the uproar in nature. May had instinctively crept nearer to Ann's place, when to her surprise she found her not there.—Oh, the child has already crept out of bed to seek father and mother,—she reasoned to herself. It was her habit to regard Ann as a mere child,—which indeed she was,—and May thought herself much older and more sensible;—but as she crept under the bedclothes, as if to hide herself, a gust of wind shook the little tent, and dismay struck her heart, and she began to cry, and wonder if-if-—What had become of her sister? Was it possible she was with Abe?—She experienced a feminine presentiment that something had happened, or was going to happen.

Her father had risen, concerned about the safety of

the tents in the storm, and was just putting in his head through the opening, when May recognizing him by the flash of lightning, impetuously asked him through her tears:—Where is Ann?

—Is she not here?

—No, no; she must be out in the storm! Oh, that child!—she sobbed.—Father, find her!

—Oh, she can't be far away;—perhaps I just missed her, for I had to pull our tent-cords tauter for safety, at the back. She must just then have gone in to her mother. But I think you had better get up, and take shelter in the cabin, although there is no door to it yet.

—I will, father, I will.

When the farmer came to the men's shed, he found them up and stirring.—Where is master Abe?—he asked.

—He hasn't come in for the night yet.

—Not been in?

—No; we have been asleep till the storm 'woke us,—but his bed is untouched.

—Dear me, what does the boy do out in such weather? I say, I think you have better all come into the cabin for shelter; the tents can't be relied upon in a storm like this.

—Yes, rough night, this, master. Thank you kindly, I think we will.

—Ann! Ann!—was heard the voice of May calling out in the black night. No response came, only the shrieking of the wind, and the deep sighs of the trees.

—Ann, where are you?

This made the farmer hasten to the cabin, where he already found his affrighted wife and eldest daughter in deepest anxiety huddled together in the doorway.

—Have you seen nothing of her?—asked the mother.

—No, nor of Abraham; he is missing too.

—Foolish children, they are hiding under a tree.

—No!—shrieked May, they have eloped!—I'm sure,
—their dark hints, and I couldn't find any of her clothes.

—What? Elope!—thundered the father.

—Impossible, child!—cried the mother, trying to
persuade herself that nothing so untoward could happen.

—Oh, that was mean of him!—May moaned.

—Oh, I'll shoot the villain!—shouted the father in a
paroxysm of rage.

—Oh, don't kill them; they'll come back when re-
pentance strikes their hearts.

—Repentance will come too late to plead with me.

—Oh, husband, don't vow vengeance! You would,
yourself, repent afterwards when too late. God will hear
the prayers of a father and a mother.

—What, in a storm like this!—sneered the maddened
father.

—Yes, in a storm like this! Does not the Almighty
ride upon the storm?—I feel the presence of God nearer
me than ever in an awful uproar in heaven and earth like
this,—almost whispered the wife in a husky voice.

—Well, perhaps you are right, wife.

—God sometimes hears our prayers before they are
uttered,—rejoined the pious mother.

.....

Abe's trusty, old, equine friend rushed madly along
the plain; it must have been for some miles, although he
accomplished it in so short a time. Still it seemed an
æon torn out of dark eternity to the two young, anxious
and terrified hearts he bore onward. Somehow it suggested

the wild ride of Tam O'Shanter, with a jading witch behind him, to Abe, who could not help feeling the similitude apposite and droll.

At last they reached the narrow ford of the creek. The horse hesitated for a moment, reared on its hind-legs, and then dashed madly on to the opposite bank, but, on alighting, the impetus was so great that the two lovers fell off in the soft mud, one on each side of the brute, who still pursued the onward course it was intently fixed upon. Abe, so to speak, gathered himself together, for he felt for a moment as if he were all in pieces; then he picked up Ann, bundle and all, and said:—Heaven be thanked, you are safe, child!

This was the first time he said "child", for now he felt more in the position of a fatherly protector, than an ardent lover, or knight-errant with his lady fair.

When he had brushed off the mud as much as he could with his bare hands, they proceeded on their homeward tramp, he, of course, carrying her bundle, which had been ripped open, and had to be re-tied. After a little while he said:—Ann, my dear child,—seeing that the horse has twice brought us back, do'nt you think it is pretty plain that we ought not to elope? I conclude that is the meaning of the powers that be.

—I guess it is,—replied Ann, with a tremulous sigh, for she was thinking of what was in store for her.

—Well, well, then, just consider this our trial-trip together on life's rough journey. Do you hear the old horse neighing? it has arrived at the barn; I believe he is laughing at us, the rascal! I asked him to bring me safe out of this pickle, and sure he did, though I did not ex-

pect it in that peculiar manner, Well, well, we must be thankful he did not break our necks.

—Yes, it did go at a break-neck speed, and no mistake!

—Yes, daisy, child, such is love's mad career at 13 and 16,—said Abe with a grim smile.—And to think that the horse had more sense than either of us!

—I guess it has common horse-sense, while we can have none of that—commented Ann, who had begun to echo Abe's sentiments, and seemed to have profited by the experience.

.....
—Father! mother! they have come home! Don't you hear? That was Abe's horse neighing, I'm sure!—May exclaimed joyously.

—Oh, no, child, it was one of our own horses.

—No, father, I know that neigh when I hear it;—it is for all the world as if the horse was laughing at you;—'tis such a peculiar neigh, a real horse-laugh, and no mistake. I could tell it anywhere.

One of the men came running along, shouting:—The horse has come home, with the saddle hanging loose!

—Oh, dear me, an accident too, and the children not with him! Ah me!—the mother moaned, and nearly sank together on the threshold.

—Keep up, wife, keep up! they may be safe yet! God may be merciful, and spare them yet, although it is a frightful night!

—Well, will you be merciful then, too?

—Hm!—Well, yes, I suppose I must, if the Lord Himself sets a good example.

—Nay, nay, I want you to feel merciful at heart in any case; whether they are spared, or not.

—You are asking too much, wife.

—God never lays greater burdens upon us than He enables us to bear.

—What would you have me do?

—Pray to God that you may bear your troubles like a man, like a true Christian.

Said he:—What a good soul you are;—far superior to the likes of me.

—You are the strong, I am the weak;—the weak become the strong in the hour of need and adversity,—she replied.

The thunder-storm had ceased, the moon shone forth, resplendent and serene, the stars came out, and all the heavens spoke of a great and glorious power before which all power of darkness vanish,—and the parched earth, that rejoiced at the refreshing rain, sent forth redolent insense of loam and resinous trees and of myriad flowers, as thanksgiving in the bright night to the allwise Creator.

Abe and Ann walked slowly through the wood, their thoughts hovering between the futile hope that they would not yet have been missed, and the dire certainty of an awful reprimand, supposing their intended elopement had been discovered. Their steps were reprehensibly tardy, seeing that they might have expected a general anxiety for their safety during the heavy storm,—but still they tarried,—Annn in particular, as if to prolong the calm before the storm. Abe trusted to his frank and manly avowal to get them both out of the scrape.

At last they were in sight of the tents and hut, and discovered in the dim moonlight the family all gathered

in the doorway of the cabin. Ann could contain herself no longer, but gave a faint cry and rushed onward to her mother's embrace, who was eager to fold her erring child to her heart.

—Oh, you are here at last!—exclaimed the father.

Abe tarried a few steps in front of them.—Now for a bold avowal,—he thought to himself.

—Where have you been, my child?—the mother asked, stroking her hair that hung loose and drabbed about her.

Ann could not answer, only sob.

—Where have you been?—sternly demanded the father of Abe.

—For a ride across the prairie.

—For a ride across the prairie?—the father repeated.

—Yes, the truth is—

—The truth is?—interrupted the irate farmer.

—Heaven help us!—sighed the mother.

—What would you have me say?"

—The truth, man.

—Very well, then, it is no use beating about the bush, the truth is I love your little daughter Ann.

—Boy; are you mad?

—Yes, somewhat madly in love. It is premature, I know; but I'll wait, so you give your consent now.

—I? Never!

—I expected as much, and that was the reason I was just bringing her to my uncle Mordecai, that he might intercede for us, for you don't know me, but might have listened to him. I am willing to wait, but if in the meantime you can find anyone who loves Ann better, or will treat her more tenderly than I, of course I will give up

my claim to a better man,—for my greatest desire is that Ann should be made happy.

—Now you speak like a sensible fellow, and I may think the matter over; you may be engaged, and sweet-heartening a little under mother's supervision for two or three years,—for ye are both too young yet to marry, but I promise nothing yet, and will think the matter over, as I said.

—Yes, do, father, sleep on it,—and now good night all,—and God bless you all.

—Good night, Abe,—said the mother,—and bless you for bringing my child back unharmed.

—Well, really, the horse is the one to be thanked, for it had more sense than I that time,— for if I had had my own wilful way, you may not have heard from us for a day or two, and been left in awful suspense in the meantime; but forgive me, Aunt, for when a young fellow is desperately in love he can't control his senses. Love is such a wayward imp that he leads us all astray.

—But if your love were of the right sort, Abe, it would unite with reason to control your senses,—sweetly spoke the mother.

—And you a woman, Aunt, and don't know that love won't listen to reason;—feeling, not reason, guides the female heart, from which my observation you will perceive that the tormenting passion is eminently feminine.

—Not when it rushes madly along, like yours, and plays the part of a robber.

—Nay, nay, you have nothing to say: didn't you steal your husband's heart, and keep it, too?

—But he got mine in exchange.

—Exactly, yes, as Ann has mine, and I hers;—that's how I have been imbued with some of the pranks of that dear, little heart.

—Get away with you! There's no arguing with you. Good night, or rather, good morning, for it is waning towards dawn,—May cut him short.

—Abe,—said Ann, who by this time had completely revived,—shall we go blackberrying again to-day?

—There you see what a little daisy she is; no sooner comes the peep-o'-day than she opens her eye as bright as ever, and is wide awake. But I shall have to return home to-day, Ann, or else my folks will be as worried about me, as yours' have been about you.

—You are a dutiful lad, then, after all,—said the father.—Ann, you haven't thanked and kissed Abe for bringing you safe back. Now you may do so.

Ann looked a little sheepish, then laughed slightly, and advancing coyly to Abe, flung her arms round his neck, and standing on tip-toe, tried to give him his sweet reward, but she did not reach up, he being so tall, and all laughed, but Abe fell gallantly on one knee, and then she gave him a loud, smacking kiss.

—What a terrible child she is?—remarked May in an undertone to her mother.

When the embrace unlocked Abe said:—This is our first kiss.

—Well,—I am proud to hear that, my lad, though I don't think I would have waited so long. Would I, mother?—asked the farmer gleefully.

She smiled to him, radiant with love, in response,

and as the sun rose over the horizon he shed his roseate shimmer,—virgin love's own color,—as a proper, fresh and pure atmospheric setting to the early bethrotal,—and the father deemed he need not sleep on the matter after all.



CHAPTER VII.

Synopsis by Abraham Lincoln:

*—I wrought out this story in my mind, when I was a young lad.....
I intended to elaborate that sketch and have it printed, and I actually once commenced, but I deemed there wasn't much in it; however, I fancy that was how love first made itself felt with me.*

* * *

Awakening.

The morning hours quickly passed, and the sun was already high in the heavens when Abe began in full earnest to think of departure, and of returning home. He felt that everyone,—his beloved stepmother most of all,—would be concerned about him,—his conscience worried him until he should meet them again. But he felt at last quite overcome with fatigue, and the excitement of the night, though he struggled hard against the somnolent feeling, and seated himself upright against the trunk of a tree, the blazing sun opposite, and he began fancying himself sitting outside his own parents' cabin,—as he had done when first he resolved upon his night-errantry, and

the golden sunshine conjured up to his mental visions dreams of a bright future, gold-emblazoned as the sun himself;—they were so dazzling glorious that it made him almost blind and forced him to invert his vision, and see what there within passed review,—dormant, embryo thoughts that would fashion themselves into realities by the force of his character when in full play upon congenial circumstances. He saw plodding farm-labor and rail-splitting, and ferry-boats and streams, and grocery and postal business, and land-measurement in one swift, conglomerate line pass before him, but his lips moved, for he fancied himself incessantly talking, talking, talking, and at last he saw only huge assemblies before him, that devoured his every word, he swaying them to tears or laughter at will, and the eager crowd jostled, and began pushing him aloft, and calling him “their own rail-splitter,” and hoisted him into that glorious rostrum, the sun, above, and he was empowered with the might of Jove, and he held the thunderbolts in his hand, and brother rose against brother, and millions clashed together in grim and fearful war, and tyranny shook on its throne of mental darkness, and his own, fair warriors were triumphant, and brought forth the black captives that had been held by tyranny, and embraced them, and healed their wounds, and called them brothers, but at the height of glory, a misguided assassin fired a shot at him, and with a benediction of humanity on his lips he died, . . and awoke,—to find himself seated with his head resting against the wall of his parental cabin, the sun blazing in his eye, and his cousin Dennis coming up to him with a shot-gun just discharged, and saying:—I thought that would wake you up. Why, you

have been asleep, Abe, this hour in the sun, instead of helping me with the hoeing.

—Ah, the hoeing,—thought Abe to himself,—rubbing his eyes,—have I come no further in my career than so, yet? Why, I must have been day-dreaming.—I'm much given that way. I thought I was away from home on a trip to South Creek camp after that pert, and merry little girl that was here the other day, and I thought I was riding on old Bill.

—Oh, yes, that old fool has been calling for you in the field two or three times.

—Ah, I heard his neighing, then, in my sleep.

—What have you been shooting, Dennis?—asked the mother on coming out from the cabin.

—Oh, nothing, just for a lark, to wake Abe, who has been dozing in the sun, this hour, or more, even during that short thunderstorm we just had.

Then Abe began to relate to them, in a brief, and captivating style, the impress of his reverie, from which recital, perhaps, now, three quarters of a century afterwards, have reached us in the foregoing chapters, some slight vibrations thereof, expanded and extended across the gulf of time.

—My whole reverie really remains as vivid to me, *as if I had written out the story in my mind*, and if I wasn't short of pen, ink and paper just now—

—Oh, I got a Turkey buzzard only yesterday, and I will boil you a pen, and as for ink if you bring me some briar root, I'll make you some. But paper is the worst of all to get, for that is scarce in these outlying parts, said his step-mother, ever encouraging him.

—Never mind just now, mother; *perhaps I may write*

it down some future day, and publish it, but it doesn't matter for the present, anyhow, for, I guess, it isn't much of a story after all, though I think it is the beginning of love with me.

—God is love,—Abe resumed after a slight pause, pondering profoundly.

—Of course He is,—the mother echoed,—and the breath of God is the principle of fecundity, says the Bible.

—Yes, but,—her speculative son continued,—the sun is the procreative cause of everything that grows, at any rate apparently the most potent is the service of God,—the sun therefore, so to say, awakens the plants,—witness “the miracle of spring,”—and the amorous condition of animals and man.—The sun therefore, indirect, and direct, as for that,—“for if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,”—if the sun procreates, then he ought to be regarded as the mythical god of all love,—of all lovers.

—I thought the moon was that,—replied the mother, who wanted to avert any infidel talk.

—The moon gives only a reflex of the sun. I don't think the ancient sun-worshippers were far out in their symbolising creed. You see, that's how I blame the intense heat of the sun for broiling my blood and brains into that concoction of an amatory nature, my running away with a girl in my day-dream, while dozing here.—But I'll be off to my mentor to see if I can't borrow “The revised Law of Indiana,” which I know is such fascinating reading that it will drive all foolish notions out of one's head, or, better still, I'll take a read of the “Declaration of Independence;” that glorious document always puts me on the right track, and, as for that, so does “The constitution of

the United States;" *there isn't a patriotic sentiment that I have, that I don't owe to these*; although I should like to make an amendment, or two, to "The Constitution," particularly regarding the poor, unhappy slaves of the South.

The sun had veered round a little to the west, and the two were now sitting in the shade of the cabin; he had doffed his hat to enjoy the cooling breath of wind that stole round the corner, and his mother gently wiped his heated forehead, saying:—That's a good lad, that'll pay better, and do more good than love-making, or story-telling, although, I grant, that your laughable idea of the animal of course being endowed with better horse-sense than a foolish boy and girl, would carry a certain instinctive moral with it,—which might benefit some young folks,—and some old ones, too, if only they look at it in the right light, that what we call common horse-sense is of more precious value, than running away with false notions.

Abe looked up in his stepmother's face, and smiled approval.

FINIS.

Appendix

CORROBORATION

By the courteous consent of Messrs S. S. McClure Co. of New York, we have reprinted the extract from Miss Ida M. Tarbell's admirable "Life of Abraham Lincoln", copyright by that firm, a standard and national work of great research, as a corroboration of his charming Indiana idyll, the elaboration of which we publish by request under the pseudonym of "Catherine Eaves".

Miss Ida M. Tarbell writes:

"The nearest approach to sentiment at this time of which we know, is a story he once told to an acquaintance in Springfield. It was a rainy day, and he was sitting with his feet on the wood-sill, his eyes on the street, watching the rain. Suddenly he looked up and said:"

"Did you ever write out a story in your mind? I did when I was a little codger. One day a wagon with a lady and two girls and a man broke down near us, and while they were fixing up, they cooked in our kitchen. The woman had books and read us stories, and they were the first I ever had heard. I took a great fancy to one of the girls, and when they were gone I thought of her a great deal, and one day when I was sitting out in the sun by the house I wrote out a story in my mind. I thought I took my father's horse and followed the wagon, and finally I found it, and they were surprised to see me. I talked with the girl and persuaded her to elope with me; and that night I put her on my horse, and we started off across the prairie. After several hours we came to a camp; and when we rode up we found it was the one we had left a few hours before, and we went in. The next night we tried again, and the same thing happened—the horse came back to the same place; and then we concluded we ought not to elope. I stayed until I had persuaded her father to give her to me.

I always meant to write that story out and publish it, and I began once; but I concluded it was not much of a story. But I think that was the beginning of love with me.”*

We have appended the quotation in its entirety at the end of the book, because if it had been put at the beginning it would have been telling the story ere it had been perused by the reader.

EDITOR

* Interview with Mr. T. W. S. Kidd of Springfield, Illinois, editor of "The Morning Monitor."





